



# A Good Cup of Coffee

*Why do we feel more alert when we drink coffee?*

- 1 What do you drink when you feel tired or when you just want to take a break? Many people like a cup of hot coffee.
- 2 Coffee comes from beans. They grow on trees with green shiny leaves. Coffee trees grow only where it is warm all year round. They also need lots of rain. Coffee trees grow high in the mountains. The best trees are in South America and Africa.

## Where It Comes From

- 3 Coffee trees grow on plantations. Workers prune the trees so that they stay under 15 feet tall. This makes it easy to pick the beans.

- 4 The beans start as pretty, white flowers. When the flowers drop, bunches of green coffee berries start to grow. Each berry has two beans in it. The berries turn red as they ripen. It takes from 6 to 14 months for them to get ripe. On some plantations, all the berries are picked at once. But for the very best coffee, workers pick only the ripe berries.

### **Green Gold**

- 5 Picking the berries is the first step. The berries go through many more steps before they can be made into coffee. The berries are spread out in the sun to dry. Next, workers rake them to be sure they all get dry. Then they put the berries into a machine to rub off the outer hulls. The beans remain, but they are still green. The workers call them green gold.
- 6 The coffee beans are shipped to other countries. They still are not ready to be made into coffee. They are roasted until they turn brown. Then the beans are put through big rollers that grind them. Most coffee that we drink does not come from just one kind of bean. It is made from a blend of beans from different kinds of trees. Some people work as trained tasters. They sip the coffees to see how they should be blended. Then the coffee is packed



in airtight containers. It is finally ready to go to the stores.

### **Look Alive!**

- 7 Why do people drink coffee when they are tired? Coffee contains a drug called caffeine [ka•feen' ]. By itself, caffeine is white, like sugar. Caffeine stimulates the body's nervous system. This makes a person feel more alert. It also helps the brain work a little faster.
- 8 Caffeine also stimulates the heart and the stomach. This is bad for some people. It keeps some coffee drinkers awake at night. For these reasons, many people drink decaffeinated [dee•kaf'•fi•nay•tud] coffee. This brew has had much of the caffeine removed.
- 9 While they are still green, coffee beans are treated with a chemical. This chemical joins itself to the caffeine. Then the chemical is steamed out, taking the caffeine with it. Like regular coffee beans, these beans are dried, roasted, and ground. Both kinds of beans can also be used to make instant coffee.

### **How It Began**

- 10 We drink billions of cups of coffee each year. People in the United States drink one-third of all the coffee in the world! How did it all start?

Coffee trees first grew in Africa. People there chewed the berries to stay awake. Then they found that they could grind the beans to make a drink. Coffee became very popular. Trees were planted in many other places.

- 11 There were no coffee trees in North America or South America. Around 1700, a young French soldier brought one tree from a garden in France. He carried it to North America on a sailing ship. It was a long, hard trip. The people on the ship began to run out of drinking water. But the young soldier shared his water with the tree, and he kept it alive. When he got to North America, he planted the tree. Almost all the coffee trees in this part of the world come from that one tree!

### **A Popular Custom**

- 12 Throughout history, thousands of lively talks about art and politics have taken place in coffeehouses. And they are popular places today for the same reasons. Important decisions have been made over cups of coffee. There are even songs about coffee. Its good taste and smell has placed coffee among the most popular of all hot drinks. Whether taken black, creamed, weak, or strong, it seems that coffee is here to stay.



**Questions**

1. Where are the best coffee trees in the world?
2. How long does it take for coffee berries to ripen?
3. How is caffeine taken out of coffee?
4. How did coffee first come to North America?

**Identifying Sequence**

1. What is the first thing that is done to the coffee berries after they have been picked?
2. When are the coffee beans roasted?
3. What is the last thing that is done to the coffee before it is shipped to stores?